

Courage

The impulse to this assembly message has come from a question that a student asked last May. The question is "Where do you get courage from?", so let me tell you a story.

In a remote mountain village the head of the village died and leadership was passed on to his son. Now the people had lived many years under the control of a huge monster who loomed like a shadow over the village. Whenever anyone tried to find freedom this large shadow appeared with a loud voice echoing through the mountain. The villagers always retreated at the sight of the dark image. The young man who was now the leader realised the time had come to confront this monster. He went out with a group of villagers and as soon as they appeared at the edge of the village the huge shadow appeared. They stepped back in fright.

The young man observed how the shadow became bigger and the voice louder as they retreated. He paused and then bravely took a step towards the shadow. It seemed to become slightly smaller. He stepped again and his view was confirmed, the shadow became less and the voice less powerful. He continued moving towards it until at his feet was the source of the shadow. He plucked up this small ephemeral object in his hand and asked 'Who are you?'

'Fear' was the weak feeble reply. He closed his hand and it disappeared entirely.

It takes courage to come to school on the first day in a new school. It takes courage to stay with the school when it moves location 16km. It takes courage by your parents to continue to believe in the school. It takes courage by the teachers to embrace the move and to do all work necessary to move the school.

It takes courage by the all the people responsible for running the school to make the bold and brave decision to buy such a wonderful campus for our school.

It is easy to say be courageous and take the first step, but something needs to happen in our hearts and minds before we can take that step.

And to make that change, there are 3 ways, according to the Bhagavad Gita, an ancient book from India.

The first way is do something out of duty. You concentrate on the task in front of you and do not think or worry about the results. So in the story we heard, this means giving full attention to the first step, watching where your foot goes, feeling the ground underneath and hearing the sounds around you. This is known as the way of action.

The second way is do something out of love. You do the action for somebody else, maybe your friends, your family, your school, your country, maybe even the creation or the universal spirit or consciousness that supports all. For example, in the story maybe the leader overcame fear because he wanted his people to be free. This is known as the way of devotion.

The third way is do something out of reason. This is to recognise that everything is transient and changing but yet at the same time there is something still and ever peaceful that is always present. And when we rest in that stillness all fear disappears. This is known as the way of knowledge.

So the challenge for this week is to look and see what makes me take the first step in being courageous.

How can I take the first step?